and water. The fact that these early figures are called rulers seems to indicate that the stories as we now have them date from a time when men, dwelling in an organized monarchy, read back that form of society into primitive times. Some of the monarchs, such as the rulers of the Hsia, may have arisen out of the efforts of noble families of later times to provide themselves with ancestors. Some, like Yao, Shun, and Yii, lauded as ideals by the Confucianists, may be in part the creation of this school in an endeavor to give to its teachings the sanction of antiquity. Of these three only Yii is mentioned in what is probably the earliest literary record, the *Shih Ching* (Classic of Poetry), and the first certainly authentic documents in which the names of Yao and Shun occur are of the sixth or the fifth century B.C. It has also been suggested that Yao, Shun, and Yii were heroes of peoples in the Yangtze Valley or of districts still farther south, and were taken over into Chinese lore when these regions were incorporated into the expanding Chinese cultural area. Yii himself was either later deified or was originally a deity, and seems to have been identified with a god who was lord of the harvest. P'an Ku is also very late (probably not earlier in our records than the third century B.C.) and may have come from the aborigines. Huang Ti may be to a large extent a pleasant fiction of the early Taoists, devised to give to their contentions the authority of the past. He may have been derived from peoples on the Northwest who were late in entering China, or owe his popularity to his association with thunder and lightning, as a kind of god of these phenomena. Possibly he was not widely known until the third century B.C. In the debates on philosophy which were one of the outstanding

features of the centuries shortly preceding the Christian era, each of the rivals would quite naturally seek to bolster its cause by ascribing its tenets to heroic figures of the past, and to assert that in an ancient golden age the practice of its teachings had been attended by prosperity. We are not entirely sure that there ever was such a ruling line as tie Hsia. It seems probable, however, that it existed. The strong tradition about it and the fact that some families of historic times claimed descent from it seem to indicate that it corresponds with a stage in Chinese history. The dates which some historians attempt to fix are, of course, untrustworthy. Those often given for the Hsia, B.C. 2205-1766, are obviously quite inaccurate.